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Thoreau's *Excursions*, A Review

David M. Robinson

Henry D. Thoreau, *Excursions*. Ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. 650p.

In the past two decades, critical interest in Thoreau has shifted to what we might term the "after Walden" period, the early and middle 1850s when Thoreau was revising the drafts of his Walden manuscript, and, through intensive botanical field studies and journal keeping, laying the groundwork for several major projects that span the genres of natural history, *belles lettres*, and philosophy. None of these projects was completed, but in retrospect we can see how enormously fruitful they were as the basis of several important late essays. He also made the Journal itself a unique kind of masterwork.

Joseph J. Moldenhauer's authoritative edition of *Excursions*, an important addition to the ongoing Princeton Thoreau edition, provides a wealth of historical, biographical and textual detail for nine essays, including three which must be reckoned vital parts of an expanded Thoreauvian canon that goes beyond *A Week* and *Walden*: "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," and "Wild Apples." These works, rooted in the Journal and passing through important embodiments as lectures, were prepared by Thoreau for publication in the *Atlantic Monthly* after he realized that his death was approaching. As such, they were gifts to his family in both a financial and a memorial sense, and also acts of a writer who understood their potential for securing him a lasting literary legacy that seemed, in the early 1860s, very doubtful. James T. Fields, the influential publisher who championed Thoreau, recognized their potential worth to a culture increasingly displaced from its outdoor and rural heritage, and helped establish Thoreau as an American original in the late nineteenth century. It took almost another century, following decades of unrelenting environmental damage, before Thoreau was understood as a prescient ecologist and social critic.

While *Walden* has certainly been the key text in establishing Thoreau's modern reputation and relevance, it has sometimes cast a long shadow over Thoreau's other works, and left us the impression of a somewhat isolated and antisocial individualist. But if he lived alone at the pond, he afterward reconstructed his experience there in a closely social and familial atmosphere, living first at the Emersons while Emerson lectured in England, and then at his family's house on Concord's Main Street. The long excursions or saunters that he describes in "Walking," and that were the basis of his later Journal and essays, also molded the final versions of *Walden*, a book that was finally published when Thoreau was deeply engaged in his long-term studies of leaf and seasonal cycles, fruits, and seeds. *Excursions* is thus more than an addendum to *Walden*; it helps us see the place of that book in the larger arc of Thoreau's tragically shortened literary career.

Moldenhauer's historical and textual discussions clarify the complex compositional and publication histories of each of the essays, and of the two volumes where they were first collected, *Excursions* (1863) and *A Yankee in Canada* (1866). Through this history we can learn much about Thoreau's literary aspirations, his rewarding but complicated relationship with Emerson, and his often frustrating efforts to find a place in the emerging marketplace of nineteenth-century magazine and book publishing. The circumstances of the original publication of several of these essays resulted in a number of textual complexities, which Moldenhauer lays out clearly in this edition. One notable example is "A Winter Walk," an early version of the form of the "excursion" that Thoreau would develop effectively in his essays on his Maine excursions and pieces such as "Walking."

Solicited by Emerson for the *Dial* after he took over the journal's editorship, "A Winter Walk" appeared in its October 1843 issue. While journal passages suggest that Thoreau had begun to formulate the essay in the fall of 1842, he rushed to complete it for Emerson after he had moved to Staten Island to live with the William Emerson family. Emerson responded to the essay coolly, but after consulting with Ellery Channing and editing it heavily, published it without providing the proofs to Thoreau. Thoreau's reaction to the published essay, as Moldenhauer describes it, was a model of restraint, given Emerson's numerous changes and his slack proofreading, which introduced what Thoreau called "sad mistakes" in the text. As a result, Thoreau attempted corrections and partial reworkings of the text in the margins of his own copy of that issue of the *Dial*. Both Thoreau's manuscript and his corrected copy of the *Dial* were preserved, leaving an immensely challenging textual situation for the modern editor. Moldenhauer's account of the process of information

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gathering and editorial decision-making is an excellent mini-seminar in the principles and practices of modern textual editing.

Thoreau's late preparation of his lectures for publication in the *Atlantic* also resulted in textual complexities, in part because he was unable to correct proof sheets for them. "Walking," an essay whose significance in both the Thoreauvian and the American canons continues to grow, was published shortly after Thoreau's death, and it is doubtful that he was able to correct the proofs that had been sent to him. No doubt he would have been infuriated by the alterations to the "heterodox references to Christianity," by which Fields "essentially emasculat[ed] the author's criticism of Christian hypocrisy" (p. 567), as Moldenhauer writes. In this case Thoreau's manuscript for the essay survives intact and serves as the basis for the copy-text of this edition.

Establishing the copy-text of several other essays, notably "Autumnal Tints" and "An Address on the Succession of Forest Trees," required painstaking archival and textual detective work, the steps of which Moldenhauer lays out clearly. One interesting side note to the textual and publication history of these essays, and to the translation of "Thoreau" into a late-nineteenth century commodity, is the use of pages of Thoreau's papers in the publication of Houghton Mifflin's 1906 "Manuscript Edition" of his works. Each set of the edition included a manuscript leaf, some of which have relevance to the essays in *Excursions*. These manuscript pages of course became widely scattered in libraries and private collections after the publication of the Manuscript Edition, and some remain unaccounted for.

Readers of Thoreau with a deep interest in these essays and in Thoreau's Journal will also want to consult this edition for the editor's informative tracing of the roots and development of the essays from Journal sources. Thoreau's process of composition is often illuminating, particularly when one can locate the context of an essay's origins amidst other related issues or events as Thoreau recorded them. This is in striking contrast with the digital nature of most literary composition in our era, which makes revision and rewriting much easier, but largely erases the evidence of the compositional process unless we diligently work to preserve it. We can be thankful, therefore, for the journalizing habits of Emerson, Thoreau, and of course many other less illustrious authors and readers of their era.

With interest growing in Thoreau as a remarkably prescient and innovative student of natural history and a prophet of modern environmentalism, and in Emerson, Fuller, and other transcendentalists as architects of progressive American thought, these essays are bound to have a growing impact on American culture. It is a pleasure to have them in this historically informative and scrupulously edited new edition.

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"Every Man a Conscience." War Tax Refusal in 21st-Century America: A Conversation with Larry Rosenwald

Randall Conrad

"Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right."

–Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

Lawrence A. Rosenwald, a war tax resister since 1986, is Anne Pierce Rogers Professor of American Literature at Wellesley College and the author of "The Theory, Practice, and Influence of Thoreau's Civil Disobedience" (2000) as well as *Emerson and the Art of the Diary* (1988). He has also written on translation theory, on the relations between words and music, and on war tax resistance. This interview, recorded in 2005, is here presented in the spirit of the 2008 Gathering theme, "The Individual and the State: The Politics of Thoreau in Our Time."

Q: I'm curious–what forms does war tax refusal take in our society today?

A: There's a wide variety of practices. In my case, it begins at the accountant's. My wife Cynthia Schwan is a pianist, so not all of our taxes are withheld on a payroll and we end up owing money to the government when we do our taxes in April. So we calculate the amount we owe, or the accountant does. Then we figure out the military percentage of the budget. We get that figure from the War Resisters League–current military spending is at least 30% of the federal budget today.[1] Then we subtract that percentage, and send it either to organizations we admire or to a progressive escrow fund.

Then we send the remainder to the IRS along with a note explaining what we're doing, and then the IRS does what it does, which is to say it sends us computer-generated letters, and finally seizes the money either from my place of work or from our bank account.

That's the very public style of being a tax resister. Filing, being locatable, and proclaiming what we're doing.

A lot of practices in the tax resistance community are different from that. Plenty of people don't file. And there are people who, when they're located by the IRS and the IRS starts to take money from their salary through their employer, leave the job they've been doing and find another job. There are people who conscientiously live below taxable income. There are people who don't keep very much money in bank accounts, in order to avoid being collected on, or move the money from one bank account to another.

The most important thing for tax resisters of this sort is keeping the money out of the hands of government, and resisters of this sort have developed a wide variety of ways of living that

are associated with war tax refusal. For my wife and me, money is less important than witness and acting in accord with conscience; we're at the public end of the tax resistance spectrum, probably also at the financially comfortable end of the spectrum, each of us established in one job for a long time.

Q: Let's continue to trace the progress of what happens to that disputed military sum–the government levies the money anyway, from sources that you don't control?

A: Yes. In our case it's pretty easy. I've been in the same place since 1980 and it's no trouble to find me there, and although Wellesley College has made it clear that my practicing war tax resistance doesn't jeopardize my job, it nonetheless feels bound to execute the IRS levy. And our bank–we've been banking there for 23 years–also executes the levies when they come to the bank rather than the college. I should say, by the way–since it's a thing I worry about from time to time–that when the government does this, it collects interest and penalties on the refused taxes, so you could argue that the disadvantage of the way we do tax resistance is that in the end, the government collects more money from us than it would have if we had just paid the taxes in the first place.

Q: How long have you been a tax resister yourself?

A: I was briefly a phone tax resister during the war in Vietnam [which ended in 1975], and that was a pretty low-risk way of doing tax resistance. Maybe as many as a million people were doing phone tax resistance.

Q: Phone tax? Is there something about the telephone?

A: Well, if memory serves, there was some discussion in Congress about using the federal excise tax on phone bills to finance some of the cost of the war. At any rate, it was a very public fact that the phone tax was something the government counted on to pay for the war, and that meant that a lot of people decided not to pay it. I think that included celebrity performers of the day who were on the left, such as Pete Seeger and Joan Baez.

"I meet this American government, or its representative the State government, directly, and face to face, once a year; no more, in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, the most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then."

It's the only time I've ever met an IRS agent. He came to my apartment one day and said, "Mr. Rosenwald, are you going to pay this tax?" (It was probably about $18.) I said "no." And he said, "well, thank you very much," and he must have found out what bank I used and gone there–I don't think it was so easily knowable in those days–and collected that money. I don't remember whether that happened again.

Anyway that was in the 1970s. In 1986, Cynthia and I started doing the kind of war tax resistance we're still doing. Why? To be candid, I had tenure by then, so I felt less in jeopardy. Cynthia's practice was expanding and she was starting to earn more money. Another reason is that during the war in Vietnam I felt very close to a number of pacifist, draft-resisting, tax-resisting friends who were doing a lot more than I was. I was opposed to the war, but I wasn't doing very much about that, and knowing that these friends of mine were doing so much left me with a growing sense that I had a kind of debt–unfinished business–no doubt getting tenure was associated in my mind with growing up–and a lot of things together contributed to pushing me towards the decision. That feeling probably stayed with me all the years of the 1970s and early 80s. By the mid-1980s I felt I could start paying that debt, discharging unfinished business.

Q: Speaking of those years, what was your political position?

A: I would describe myself as a pacifist. One colleague at Wellesley calls me a fundamentalist pacifist. And during the Vietnam war years it wasn't hard to oppose military spending if you were on the left, whether you were a pacifist or not.

Q: When I read your earlier article about tax resistance,[2] I had not conceived of a war-resisting or tax-refusing community. Yet you described yourself so eloquently as feeling on the margins even of that.

A: I suppose it has to do with the changing border between an individual and their community. When I started doing this, I guess I thought about it the way Thoreau thinks about it. I thought, well, I'll do this, and somehow purge my conscience, and then I'll just go back to doing what I was doing anyway. But that turned out not to be the case for me. I ended up feeling a desire to go to an occasional meeting and spend some time with other people who were doing this. I met people I liked–very much in fact–and then ended up joining committees and going to groups, and having my life complicated–not simplified, as I'd imagined.

I was very impressed with a lot of the people I was meeting, which is the reason I felt marginal at the time I wrote that early article. Much more so than I do now. Maybe I was susceptible to a kind of machismo in war tax resistance – I assume it can exist in pretty much any activity – in the sense of admiring the courage of people who take extreme risks. There were a couple of actions in western Massachusetts in the late 1980s or early 1990s in which homeowners' houses were seized by the IRS for nonpayment of taxes. Both in Massachusetts and, in the late 1990s, in a case in Maine.

Q: These were houses of resisters who were not paying?

A: They hadn't paid, and they couldn't be collected from, in the way that my wife and I can be. In other words they didn't keep their money in the bank. Some had given any savings away. They were employed in such a way that it wasn't possible for the government to attach their salary, and so the houses were seized. That kind of extreme risk-taking I admired as manifesting great courage, but at the same time I felt some distance from it myself.

"But, if I deny the authority of the State when it presents its tax-bill, it will soon take and waste all my property, and so harass me and my children without end. This is hard. This makes it impossible for a man to live honestly and at the same time comfortably in outward respects. It will not be worth the while to

accumulate property; that would be sure to go again. You must hire or squat somewhere, and raise but a small crop, and eat that soon. You must live within yourself, and depend upon yourself always tucked up and ready for a start, and not have many affairs."

I think that's clear in my earlier essay about war tax resistance that you read, which had to do with the idea of what a person's vocation is. How much it might matter to someone like me to be a professor of English literature or do business with the same bank or put down roots in a community. Actually, after writing that piece, I felt closer to the community. I'm more content with the degree of risk I'm willing to take. At least I know better how to describe it. So that piece was not only a record of how I felt at the time but a means of changing how I felt.

Q: Somewhat as writing "Civil Disobedience" probably was for Thoreau, in terms of becoming independent from his mentor Emerson, among other things?

A: I had Emerson and Thoreau very much in mind. Up to a certain point in his life, Emerson has this idea that you really can manage not to be ensnared by politics, and he's good at it. I mean good at not being ensnared. After he writes an outraged letter to President Van Buren about the forced deportation of the Cherokees (1838), he regrets it the next day because he feels it's caught him in the web of politics.[3] It's not until the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law (1851) that he feels that he has no choice but to take some political stance because not doing so is already a political stance. What I admire about Thoreau is that he sees more quickly how this dilemma is embodied in an immediate reality. Thoreau already realizes that paying the poll tax puts you in the same position as the Fugitive Slave Law does–the position Emerson later realized he was in. That is, you can pay it or not pay it, but there's no choice that's neutral. It's a great microscopic perception.[4]

Q: The contrast between Emerson and Thoreau in 1846 reflects the wider schisms around abolitionism and antislavery at the time. In July 1846, specifically, Thoreau lets himself be put in jail, and Emerson is totally floored at first. Even upon reflection, he thinks it's the most vulgar thing imaginable. Emerson literally can't imagine how someone can choose jail. In the social mores of the time, it just was not an option.

A: That's right.

"If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, 'But what shall I do?' my answer is, 'If you really wish to do any thing, resign your office.' When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished."

Q: Tax resistance in Thoreau's time was something practiced by two or three individuals at most (Thoreau, plus Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane three years before him). Considering the form of government and taxation then and now, would you see a difference between tax resistance 160 years ago and what it accomplishes now?

A: I'd need to think about it more, but here's what comes to mind. In Thoreau's time he could truthfully say, "I meet the government in the person of its tax collector, and then only once a year, and that's the only occasion in which a person situated as I am meets the government." In comparing Thoreau's situation with that of any war tax resister today, I'm struck by two ways in which things have changed.

First, it's a behemoth government today, a spider's web. The government's everywhere. That makes the task harder. In fact, a lot of people I know in the war tax resistance community are driven to very great lengths of scrupulousness about this–what do they pay, what do they not pay? How much barter will they do to get their economic activity outside of the governmentally supervised, on-the-books cash nexus? So it's harder and more complicated, because the government is everywhere.

The second thought, which corresponds at least to my experience, is that it's much harder precisely because the government is nowhere. Thoreau has his neighbor who's collecting the taxes, and Thoreau knows where to locate him, and the neighbor knows where to locate Thoreau. It's perfectly clear who's who, and who's in what office. But in our experience of war tax resistance today, the government isn't anywhere, there's no one person to talk to. It's even more impersonal since the IRS introduced automation. Now the only individual collection agents are the names and toll-free phone numbers on the computer-generated form letters. But I've never talked to those individuals, and IRS agents don't come to my door any more–they don't even have to visit the bank. They stay in their offices and I stay in mine, and one computer talks to another.

"My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with, —for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel, —and he has voluntarily chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well what he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he will treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more impetuous thought or speech corresponding with his action?"

So in that sense it feels like Thoreau has the luxury of a genuine, intimate face-to-face, voice-to-voice encounter with his government even if it's only once a year. As I said, the only time I ever spoke personally to an IRS agent was in 1974, before there was so much automation.

That's less true for those tax resisters who are harder for the computerized IRS to locate, but I still think it feels less personal. In any case, they don't know the agent personally, and the two don't have to live as neighbors after the confrontation. There is not the same community.

Q: On an ideal level, though, the value of performing an act of tax resistance perhaps remains the same, because it validates where you stand and what you think, and proclaims it publicly so there's no doubt about it, and calls attention to the injustice.

A: Yes. And while it implicates the resister in a set of values that may be centered in the individual, his act affects others. For example, one effect on our two daughters, who are today in their

20s, was worry. They thought, are they going to take our house? Are our parents going to jail? We told them at one point, if our being tax resisters would make it hard for them to go to college for any reason, that their going to college was more important. It also gave our kids a sense that there was something that we really believed in strongly, and that's a far more powerful influence than if we had just said in so many words that we were pacifists or whatever. And being a resister has odd, unpredictable effects on all sorts of other things. How you write or who turns out to be surprisingly friendly or unfriendly or what happens to you the day after you've done tax resistance, and how it makes you describe yourself.

Another thing is that once you start refusing to perform this quite widely performed action called tax-paying, you start thinking about the meanings of other ordinary actions of all sorts. A small example would be that I now feel more obliged to think about where my clothing comes from. Not because there's a logical connection, but because the effect of doing the one action is to say, well, if I'm going to be that kind of person, then I have to figure out what that means in other perspectives. None of this was apparent to me when we started to do this in 1986. As I said, I thought it was the one political action that I'd ever have to take. But the consequences on me, in diverse areas of activity, have been great.

Q: I feel more admiration for the courage of some of the tax resisters you've described. Reading the essay "Civil Disobedience" today, it's impossible for me to hear the famous line about Mexico being "unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army" without picturing the invasion of Iraq and our country's utter disruption of that part of the world. I'm grateful for this chance to have learned more about one form of present-day resistance to civil government.

"But when the friction comes to have its machine, and oppression and robbery are organized, I say, let us not have such a machine any longer. In other words, when a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty the more urgent is the fact, that the country so overrun is not our own, but ours is the invading army."

I am convinced that there is no very important difference between a New Englander's religion & a Roman's. We both worship in the shadow of our sins.— They erect the temples for us. Jehovah has no superiority to Jupiter.
***Journal*, Sunday, June 5, 1853**

Notes

[1]As published by the War Resisters League at its web site, www.warresisters.org/US_military_spending.htm. See also information published by the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee at www.nwtrcc.org.

[2]The reference is to a 1999 talk, published as "On Being a Very Public War Tax Resister" in *More Than a Paycheck*, the newsletter of the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee, April 2000. Another article is: Lawrence Rosenwald, "On War Tax," *Agni* 35 (1991), 27-36.

[3]"Yesterday went the letter to Van Buren,–a letter hated of me; a deliverance that does not deliver the soul. I write my journal, I read my lecture with joy; but this stirring in the philanthropic mud gives me no peace. I will let the republic alone until the republic comes to me." Emerson, Journal, April 19, 1838.

[4]See Lawrence A. Rosenwald, "The Theory, Practice, and Influence of Thoreau's Civil Disobedience," *A Historical Guide to Henry David Thoreau*, ed. William E. Cain (New York: Oxford University. Press, 2000), 153-179.

The "Higher Law": Then and Now

Sandra Harbert Petrulionis

"At last it occurred to me that what I had lost was a country."
—Henry D. Thoreau, "Slavery in Massachusetts"

When Henry Thoreau declared in "Civil Disobedience" that "the only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right," when he asked if there could "not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience", and when he asserted that "they only can force me who obey a higher law than I" (*Reform Papers* 65, 81), he took an uncompromising stance in an increasingly heated public debate. By the time Thoreau referred to "the higher law" in 1848, the phrase had been part of the American political lexicon for years, understood to mean a doctrine of natural law, of individual conscience and/or divine edict.

"Higher law" came to New England with the Puritans' concept of divine law. Later—for white, male, property owners—it became a cornerstone of the Declaration of Independence if not of the Constitution (Carter 49). While after the Revolutionary War most northerners contentedly left the subject of human commerce for the individual states to settle, a radical minority—"extremists" they'd be branded today—held that the fundamental governing document of American law was in fact proslavery; it became the abolitionists' mantra that either the Constitution must be amended to abolish slavery, or that northern states must, in Thoreau's words, "dissolve her union with the slave holder instantly" (*Journal 8* 210), a largely symbolic position known as "disunion." A month before *Walden* appeared in August 1854 with its chapter entitled "Higher Laws," Thoreau publicly lamented, at a state antislavery rally, the dearth of "men of probity—who recognize a higher law than the Constitution, or the decision of the majority" (*Reform Papers* 104). This politicized nature of "higher law" had long been William Lloyd Garrison's call in his weekly newspaper, the *Liberator*, and it was one to which many in Concord, Massachusetts, responded.

During the early 1800s, religious and political leaders including Charles Grandison Finney, Lewis Tappan, and William Ellery Channing had cited "a higher law" in their antislavery

protests (Russell Parker 10, 37-39), but to first-term New York senator and former governor William H. Seward goes the credit for bringing the phrase into popular use during the turbulent 1850s. Just days after Senator Daniel Webster so infamously threw his support to the proposed Fugitive Slave Law in March 1850, Seward urged his Congressional colleagues to adhere to "a higher law than the Constitution" and vote against the proposed legislation (Baker 74).

Massachusetts abolitionists never forgave Senator Webster for selling out their antislavery ideals, and they became ardent champions of Seward's "higher law" doctrine. Speaking against the Fugitive Slave Law in Concord, Waldo Emerson avowed that "an immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it" (57). Although several Concord families joined Emerson in pledging to disobey the new law, former resident Sophia Hawthorne surely irritated her abolitionist sisters Mary Peabody Mann and Elizabeth Peabody in deeming "higher laws" simply "another form of 'transcendental slang'" (qtd. in Wineapple 332).

While Webster derided "the fanatical and the factious abolitionists of the North," southern congressmen called for Seward to resign (Russell Parker 58). The "higher law" thus became the new battle cry as a younger, multi-racial contingent of abolitionists pledged to resist the Fugitive Slave Law, violently if necessary. Those attending an antislavery meeting in New York in 1850 even proposed Seward and Frederick Douglass as a presidential ticket, an unlikely prospect that led the editor of the Montgomery, Alabama, *Gazette* to wish that a chain be "fastened indissolubly around both their necks" (qtd. in *Liberator*, 10 May 1850). Successful rescues of incarcerated slaves, such as one led by students and faculty of Oberlin College, garnered headlines, on the one hand celebrating "higher law" victories, and on the other scorning Ohio as "a very bad, traitorous, higher-lawish State" (qtd. in *Liberator*, 11 Apr 1851). Later that year, when a runaway slave in Christiana, Pennsylvania, killed one of his pursuers, the *Boston Courier* laid the "crime" at the feet of abolitionists, whose "'higher law' . . . is only the musket and bullet in practice" (September 26, 1851).

During the 1850s, politics and religion became inseparable in many pulpits. Abolitionists especially exploited "higher law" rhetoric in their efforts to shame tentative northern clergymen into denouncing slavery. Methodist clergymen such as William Hosmer added "higher law" doctrine to their Sunday dogma, fueling resentment by conservative elements in their congregations. Unitarian minister Theodore Parker became an ardent promoter of the "higher law." In militant speeches Parker decried the Fugitive Slave Law, proclaiming that it "annihilate[s] the observance of the law of God" (148), causing one critic to judge that he "wielded [the higher law] as an ideological weapon" (Klein 12).

Other brethren of the cloth, however, found unpersuasive these "appeals . . . made to a HIGHER LAW" (Lord 4). For example, although Rev. John C. Lord of Buffalo, New York, concurred with abolitionists as to the supremacy of God's law, he emphasized instead "the duties which men owe to God, as subjects of his moral government" (5). Similarly, Boston's Rev. Moses Stuart cautioned that "It is useless to talk about *conscience*. . . . It is an imputation on the men who formed our government" (qtd. In Russell Parker 52). Indeed it was.

Outraged southerners contended that all this talk of a "higher law" encouraged increasing numbers of slaves to run away (Russell Parker 169). South Carolina Senator Andrew Pickens Butler (whose relative Preston Brooks would soon beat senseless Senator Charles Sumner) famously equated the "higher law" with the devil: "Sir, the teacher of that law was an ancient author. It was no less than the serpent who crept up into the Garden of Eden and whispered to Eve that there was a Higher Law." By 1858, southerners grew more animated, with none other than Jefferson Davis proposing that these "*higher law preachers should be tarred and feathered, and whipped* . . . a fit object for a Lynch law that would be higher than any he could urge" (qtd. in Welfle 195, 196).

A year later, the talk—and, for many, the action and principle—were intensified when abolitionist John Brown took his "higher law" crusade to Harpers Ferry, Virginia. The *Boston Courier* laid "the whole mischief" of Brown's raid on "the stupendous fallacy of the 'higher law'" (November 11, 1859). But Henry Thoreau was of a different mind, deeming Brown "a superior man [who] . . . did not recognize unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid," "a transcendentalist above all" (*Reform Papers* 125, 115). By 1859, thirty years of nonviolent, generally ineffectual moral suasion had persuaded many abolitionists—Thoreau included—that "civil disobedience" could accommodate violent protest in the pursuit of social justice. Thoreau did not expressly defend Brown's violence, in Kansas or in Virginia, but he pled for the character of a man who had acted on the "higher law" principle of justice for all.

A century and a half later, we find ourselves in a war torn, election-year America where the polarizing rhetoric echoes that of Thoreau's time. A new t-shirt at the Thoreau Society's Shop inquires, "What Would Thoreau Do?" Perhaps in response, a bumper sticker on a nearby counter reminds us that "It is the province of the historian to find out, not what was, but what is." With such rousing models of principled American reform before us, when, as in antebellum America, the tiresome abstractions of "freedom" and "war on terror" directly confront the tangible

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realities of legally condoned or axiomatically rationalized torture and incarceration without charge or representation, if not slavery itself, perhaps it is time we draw inspiration from our ideological forebears.

Unlike other authors whose works we admire on multiple thematic and aesthetic grounds, we revere the transcendentalists as exemplars of how to *live*, for their relentless insistence that we transform—that we constantly re-form—not only ourselves but our society. We read, reread, and teach *Walden* because it offers an alternative to the corporate ladder of gratuitous materialism; we pore over the natural history essays because they bestow a preservation ethic for our imperiled planet. Shouldn't we likewise appeal to Thoreau's political essays as models of outrage at a war-engendering coalition of economic and military might that rides herd over our society as surely as the Slave Power did over the mid-nineteenth century?

If Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mohandas K. Gandhi could take from "Civil Disobedience" a stirring inspiration for their respective crusades for social justice, then surely Thoreau and his "higher law" compatriots must counsel us in 2008. An itinerant social activist at best, Henry Thoreau nevertheless puts us—with our insatiable consumerism, our vapid notions of civil protest—to shame. The Society's theme this year for the Annual Gathering is "The Individual and the State: The Politics of Thoreau in Our Time." As we convene to pay homage to Thoreau and Concord, let us also consider what constitutes the "higher law" in the twenty-first century. What *would* Thoreau do . . . today?

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How can a man be a wise man, if he doesn't know any better how to live than other men?—If he is only more cunning & intellectually subtle?

***Journal*, April 21, 1854**

The Politics of Thoreau: A Spritual Intent

Cathryn McIntyre

The theme of the next Thoreau Society annual gathering is: "The Individual and the State: The Politics of Thoreau in Our Time." Thoreau's views are always worth considering when assessing the political landscape of any time, but as I read through his politically inspired essays and lectures I am continually impressed, not by his political views, but by the way his spiritual awareness influenced his political views, and in fact all of his thinking, and it is that spiritual awareness, not his politics, that interests me most.

I believe Thoreau was first and foremost a spiritual man, a prophet in some ways, as from his post there at Walden Pond he foresaw the many challenges that would face mankind if we continued, as we did, at full speed into the industrial age. He had already witnessed men who led lives of quiet desperation as they sought satisfaction and fulfillment in material gains, and he knew this futile effort would only increase as new industry brought more goods to be obtained and more hours were spent working to earn the money to pay for such goods. The instruction from his masterwork, *Walden*, to "simplify, simplify" has for 154 years now summed up his message that satisfaction cannot be found in material things and the statement from his essay "Walking" that "Wildness is the preservation of the world" reminds us that nature offers us salvation as it stands as a testament to purity and truth, while at the same time it calls us to recognize what is most natural within us. It is important to note that he says "wildness" not "wilderness" as he is not simply speaking of nature (the wind, the trees, the birds), but of the quality of nature within man. The preservation of the world is within the wildness of nature and in the wildness, or we might say naturalness, of man, and the natural state of man is to Thoreau a spiritual one. This is a theme that is present throughout all of his work.

In *Walden* he states: "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Thoreau also states that he wants to "suck out all the marrow of life" and he doesn't do this in a factory or even a university, he does this in his relations with nature and in establishing a direct relationship with the divine.

It is in *Walden* where he remarks: "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." Thoreau believed if you confine a man under government rules, tie him to his occupation, and monopolize his time with strictly material pursuits while holding him back from a direct relation with nature or from a direct connection to the divine, you will have a man who is leading a life of quiet desperation.

Thoreau spoke to the soul of man and challenged him to leave be the material concerns, to demand instead freedom and the right of self-determination. He inspired us to trust the wisdom that we receive through our own conscious connection to spirit and encouraged us to have the strength to pursue truth on our own, to stand up against the forces of politics or religions that attempt to use us for their own purposes and to establish instead our own true connection to the divine. This may be a solitary journey, but it is

one that always leads us back to the whole.

Thoreau's political views were formed around this thinking. The only laws that he believed in were what he called the higher laws. He was not a politically-minded man. He did not support any political system. He believed that all institutions of government were by their very nature corrupt. He found the laws of the state to be unjust because they sought to dominate and control their citizens and undervalued the right of every man to self determination. He did not believe in majority rule because even if the majority were in agreement it did not guarantee that what they had agreed upon was right. The only majority Thoreau believed in was a majority of one.

In Thoreau's view, the wisdom that comes to the individual through his own conscience is far superior to the wisdom that is offered by any political system or state government.

In his essay most familiarly known as, "Civil Disobedience," he asks:

> Can there not be a government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience, then?

The rights of the individual are paramount to Thoreau, and the only government he could respect would be one that comes about naturally through a consensus of conscience-driven individuals. At no time would he favor the rights of the state over the rights of the individual and he had no respect for any man who allowed the laws of the state to overrule his own sense of right. In "Civil Disobedience" he states:

> I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience.

And he goes on to discuss how "essentially revolutionary" this concept of divinely inspired action is:

> Action from principle—the perception and the performance of right —changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was. It not only divides states and churches, it divides families; ay, it divides the individual, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

Thoreau's willingness to trust conscience is evidence that he was aware of something much deeper and more relevant than any political concern. Thoreau and all of those who followed the philosophy known as transcendentalism, which favors intuition over rationality in determining ultimate truth, believed that the conscience was man's link to the divine source, what Emerson called "the wise silence" and what Thoreau recognized as a wider spiritual reality. It matters not whether it is called Allah, Buddha, Krishna or God, it is all the same and it is the source from which we are all born.

Those who have a highly developed sense of the spiritual have an easier time grasping this concept, but those who are unable to see themselves as anything other than physical beings never fully understand Thoreau's broad intent and are left with a cursory or surface understanding of his true message. They label him a naturalist, a botanist or a surveyor of land, which are all correct words to define his interests and occupations, and yet they do not address the most relevant part of him. They also erroneously label him an anarchist because he encourages defiance of government rule, even though in "Civil Disobedience" he clearly asks for "not at once no government, but at once a better government." He is not advocating for a system of anarchy, where every man's self-centered and ego-driven desires are paramount and at odds with his fellow man. What he envisions is a government that allows for perfect sovereignty for the individual. This is for him a manner of living where conduct is not dictated by the laws of a government, but by the higher laws. When guided by those laws, individuals act in proper portion and respect for one another and live in peace and harmony. This is Thoreau's ideal. This is his hope for mankind.

Thoreau's political philosophy then is not an antagonistic one. He is not simply calling for dissention and disputes with government for the sake of defiance, but he is calling for each individual to better understand his own true nature, to recognize himself as a spiritual being that is part of a much larger whole, and then to act in accordance with a true sense of right that can only come from a direct relation to that center. No political or religious system is necessary to make this connection. It is there and available to all of us. It is who we are, and Thoreau teaches us that we can reach this through a deep respect and cultivation of nature, which he sees as our greatest guide for discovering the truth of all. Thoreau sees nature as a perfect system, one where politics are not needed or necessary. All parts and particles of nature are in touch with their true selves; a tree is a tree, a frog is a frog. For Thoreau it is an environment of divinely inspired beings, in touch with their own true natures and acting accordingly and he wishes the same for man. In "Civil Disobedience" he states:

> I perceive that, when an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side, the one does not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws, and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance, overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man.

Thoreau believed man must be allowed to cultivate the soul within him, and if allowed to do so, each man will arrive at the same conclusion, and it is one that will bring enlightenment not just to the individual but to all. This may be considered by some to be an idealistic view, but this was Thoreau's truth, his perfect understanding of what is.

Those who seek to challenge such views often point to an apparent flaw in Thoreau's thinking that arises when the subject of politically- or religiously-based fundamentalism is raised, but there is a distinct difference between Thoreau's faith in the individual to use his conscience to intuit proper and right action and the faith of the religious fanatics who blow up abortion clinics or who engage in terrorism such as America's 9-11 or England's 7-7. Those individuals are not engaged in acts that are guided by the divine source of ultimate truth; they are committed to following the imperatives outlined for them by their religious or political beliefs. They are engaged in a form of majority rule.

Thoreau's support of abolitionist John Brown is another example that is thought to challenge the wisdom of his beliefs. Thoreau believed Brown to be a man whose actions were guided by conscience and by an ultimate sense of right. Much like Thoreau, Brown saw slavery and the government that sanctioned it as evil and could not sit back resolutely and allow it to continue unchallenged. For Thoreau this meant speaking out publicly against slavery and engaging wherever he could in activities that worked against it, but for Brown this meant an organized revolt, gathering together men who shared his sympathies and would finance his activities and putting together an armed unit of men who would help him carry out his often violent strategies. Many believed Brown to be motivated more by his own religious zeal

than by any connection to what was right, and there were many who questioned his sanity, but Thoreau remained steadfast in his support of a man whose actions he saw as divinely inspired, and he lashed out against a government that would put to death such a righteous man.

In his lecture first delivered in Concord, Massachusetts, on October 30, 1859, and in the essay record of it called, "A Plea for Captain John Brown," he states:

> The only government that I recognize,—and it matters not how few are at the head of it, or how small its army,—is that power that establishes justice in the land, never that which establishes injustice.

The government that put John Brown to death was an unjust government, and Brown was, in Thoreau's view, the worthiest of men. Given how violent many of Brown's activities were, it is remarkable that Thoreau stood by him. It is a testament to the devotion he had not just to Brown, but to his own ideals and principles.

In his plea for John Brown, Thoreau expresses his abiding faith in Brown with such statements as: "Truth is his inspirer, and earnestness the polisher of his sentences," "He shows himself superior to nature. He has a spark of divinity in him," and "This man was an exception, for he did not set up even a political graven image between him and his God." This last statement is most critical, for it is a statement that verifies Thoreau's truest political beliefs, that no government or political image should ever come between man and his God.

It seems to me then that in every direction we go in Thoreau's work we find the same sometimes subtle but ever present message, that we are spiritual beings, born of the same divine source and our actions must be guided by our conscious connection to that source and not by the laws of any government. How great the impact of this philosophy might be on our times if it were more widely understood and practiced. If we followed the wisdom that comes to us directly from the divine, we might no longer have the need for, or the conflicts that result from, politics or religion.

In a journal entry from April 2, 1852, Thoreau states:

> I do not value any view of the universe into which man and the institutions of man enter very largely and absorb much of the attention. Man is but the place where I stand, and the prospect hence is infinite. It is not a chamber of mirrors which reflect me.

Thoreau and Asperger's Syndrome?

Robert M. Thorson

All things considered, Henry David Thoreau had two salient personal traits. He was an odd duck socially: honest to a fault, unlucky in love, a life-long loner, prone to rub people the wrong way, a goad to Concord society, financially dependent on others, and seemingly incapable of holding down a steady job. On the other hand, he was a scientific and literary genius, effervescing with poetic abstractions on multiple levels of meaning. A more concise way of summarizing these traits is to point out that Thoreau was the only adult male on the census who deliberately chose to live alone. Yet it was he who wrote the town's most famous book.

I suggest that Thoreau had Asperger's syndrome, or came close to having it. This diagnosis is part of the autism spectrum disorder that is characterized by social impairment, but which is often combined with high-level thinking, especially in the domain of literature. I'm not suggesting he was disabled. I am suggesting he was wired differently.

Being a geology professor who slouched (rather than sauntered) toward Thoreau in middle age, I don't have the professional credentials to advance this as a proper hypothesis. Nor do I know anyone who can. Hence, my purpose here is to pique the interest of someone who is also a Thoreauvian at heart, but who is also a properly qualified psychiatrist. Perhaps they will pursue this idea further and get back to me, if only to satisfy my curiosity. For all I know, this hypothesis has been made before and published before.

My eldest son has autism. For twenty-six years I have been fascinated by the way this devastating social impairment combines with his unique genius. Over the decades, I have gotten to know several young people from his school days who were properly diagnosed as Aspergerians. I've also known closely and worked with undiagnosed young adults who manifest the symptoms. One of them was a graduate student with a creative, albeit quirky, intelligence. During the day, this resigned bachelor wore the same clothes every day while happily scrambling up and down steep slopes through dusty, bug-infested thickets. At night he read the lesser known works of Herman Melville. Vivid memories of this extraordinary 20-something man came back to me while reading the Thoreau profiled by social historian Robert Gross in his 80-page essay "That Terrible Thoreau: Concord and Its Hermit." I quote a few of its lines below, beginning with the first.

> Henry David Thoreau was not an easy man to like. . . .[H]e tightly guarded the solid wall he erected around himself. From his earliest days, he seemed peculiar. As a schoolboy, he earned the contempt of his peers by refusing to join their play. . . . At college, he was no more successful. His Harvard classmates found him "cold and unimpressible" and made him the "butt for jokes." Even his defenders conceded he was "brusque." Elizabeth Hoar said "I love Henry. . . but I can never like him."

These were the descriptions my students and I were reading when the question popped into my head: "Could the lifetime of odd behavior witnessed by nineteenth-century Concord townsmen be a manifestation of Asperger's syndrome?" When we met the next day to discuss "That Terrible Thoreau," several of these honor students helped guide the discussion about Asperger's based on their own direct experience with the high-functioning end of this spectrum disorder.

After class, I consulted my personal copy of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* Fourth Edition as published by the American Psychiatric Association. Based on my close reading of Thoreau's writing, combined with everything I've read from his biographers, critics, and analyzers, I held my own mental image of Thoreau up to the diagnostic light shed by the *DMS-IV-TR*. In my un-professional opinion, Thoreau barely meets or falls slightly short of criteria A (impairment in social interaction) and B (abnormal intensity and focus on restricted behavior). He definitely meets Criteria C (impairment in social, occupational functioning), D (no language delay), E (no delay in cognition, self-help, non-social adaptive behavior, and childhood curiosity), and F (does not meet criteria for autism or schizophrenia).

Thoreau manifests two other Aspergian traits not included in the clinical description. His primary social connection was through his family, to which he remained deeply devoted his whole life. This was especially true about his brother John. Yet, like many Aspergerians, Thoreau also longed for a stronger connection to (if not acceptance by) the neighbors and townsmen who so often disliked him.

It's clinically impossible to diagnose a dead person. But I can suggest that if Thoreau were alive and did submit himself to close scrutiny, a battery of board certified psychiatrists would likely split on a proper diagnosis. More conservatively, I'm suggesting that even if every qualified clinician agreed that Thoreau fell short of the diagnostic criteria, they would also agree that his significant social impairment combined with extraordinary ability is consistent with a diagnosis. Quoting the beautifully written recent autobiography of John Elder Robinson, who has the syndrome, "Many [young Aspergerians] have such exceptional verbal skills that some people refer to the condition as Little Professor Syndrome." Thoreau might have fit that description as well.

If you've read this far, I will have made my moot point. Thinking about Thoreau as a clinically impaired *savant* has helped me understand why he lived the way he did, and how he managed to write what has turned out to be my favorite book.

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Analyzing Thoreau

Susan Frome

Cycles and Psyche by Michael Sperber, MD (2004), recently advertised in the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, in essence is a psychiatric analysis of the nineteenth-century poet/naturalist Henry David Thoreau. Sperber, a psychiatrist and teacher at Harvard Medical School, was in 2004 a psychiatric consultant to the Middlesex, Massachusetts Sheriff's Department. Sperber claims that the work is not at all a biography, but rather it "focuses in some clinical detail upon Thoreau's symptoms of severe mood, stress, and personality disorders....[It] explores Thoreau's psychological vulnerabilities–chiefly guilt, shame, and an abhorrence of being judged–which led to his impervious defenses." He goes on with this psychiatric perspective to include "acute facsimile lockjaw and chronic post-traumatic stress, bipolar, and 'as-if' disorders." He also suggests that Thoreau devised methods "to achieve and maintain mental equilibrium."

When Thoreau's dear brother, John, died on January 11, 1842, Thoreau contracted this near-fatal "facsimile lockjaw" a few days later, which Sperber sees as a result of "sibling rivalry and Oedipal guilt," due partly to their mutual love for Ellen Sewell who turned down both their offers of marriage. After his recovery, Thoreau then allegedly suffered the post-traumatic stress disorder. In addition, Sperber believes from his study that Thoreau suffered from bipolar distress which might have something to do with epilepsy, especially because the philosopher seemed to suffer from hypergraphia, "the overpowering urge to write. Such writing is typically cosmic or philosophical in content."

Later, the doctor goes deeply into The Icarus Complex, which, he states "may be considered central to Thoreau's life and work – his 'covert myth.' Thoreau ...[uses] imagery which is Icarian in content." The argument being that Icarian imagery has to do with "high" moments, events, ideas (the "high" end of bipolar), and Daedalian imagery representing the "low" end of bipolar illness, which Sperber describes as going deep into swampland (depression), which Thoreau certainly did like to do.

On balance, it's interesting to note how many scholars and essayists use the same source material to prove their differing points of view. In Joseph Wood Krutch's *Henry David Thoreau* (1948), there are no highs or lows to be found. In fact, Thoreau is characterized as joyful, "a symptom by means of which right conduct may be recognized." David Robinson, in his *Natural Life: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism* (2004), focuses on Thoreau as a keen observer who formed his literary and scholarly ambitions at Harvard and went on to live "free and uncommitted" as the first requirement of his vocation as a poet. As for his loss of his brother, rather than descending into any depressive state, he "converted his sense of loss into a motive for positive change and purposeful living, embodying his hope for a transformed life in the figure of a naturalist." Throughout Robinson's book, Thoreau is often seen as open and thoughtful, seeking harmony and the "empirical accumulation of facts." On this same empirical note, Sherman Paul in his collection of *Critical Essays* (1962), noted that Thoreau, as a practical man, tested everything according to "its fitness to living needs."

In *Thoreau's Ecstatic Witness* (2001), rather than any indication of feverish bipolar experiences, Allan Hodder found that Thoreau had a lifetime of epiphanies which were expressed through his poetry and journal notations.

Sperber presents his case deliberately and clearly. However, one has to wonder if any person from the past can be psychoanalyzed solely on the basis of his or her writings or events in their life. Moreover, in the light of research and writings to date, one must seriously question the notion that Thoreau's ecstasies are aspects of mental illness. If so, perhaps by extension we had better start reexamining all the philosophers who valued their passions and blissful solitude and all the saints who had epiphanies. Were they all deluded?

> It is not that we love to be alone, but that we love to soar, and when we do soar, the company grows thinner & thinner till there is none at all....We are not the less to aim at the summits, though the multitude does not ascend them.
>
> Thoreau to H. G. O. Blake, May 21, 1856

Hubbard's River Tract and "Our Portion of the Infinite"

J. Walter Brain

"We are surrounded by a rich and fertile mystery." Henry D. Thoreau, Journal, September 7, 1851

The following article, published originally in *The Concord Journal* on April 3, 2008, dwells on a significant tract of land in Thoreau Country, in Concord, Massachusetts: Hubbard's River Tract, a parcel of which, Hubbard's Grain Field,

came on the real estate market in the fall of 2007. A local conservation organization has since endeavored to raise funds and local support to preserve in perpetuity one of Concord's oldest farm fields in continuous agricultural use, a parcel that proves keystone to the integrity of the Hubbard tract and, as I attempt to render true, to the very pith of Thoreau Country.

"We are receiving our portion of the infinite,"[1] Henry Thoreau enters in his *Journal* for September 7, 1851, inspired by the beauty of the fields he had crossed that day in Cyrus Hubbard's Farm, a riparian tract much of whose extent in the mid-nineteenth century has been spared from development, and whose fields lie at the core of what may be called today Hubbard's River Tract in the landscape geography of the Concord region and of Thoreau Country. Extending over both sides of the present Route 2 highway, the tract affords large open fields, pasture, mature upland woods--Hubbard's "Groves"--a sizable wooded swamp, a large river meadow known as Hubbard's Great or Broad Meadow, and what Thoreau called the Hubbard Shore, which stretches for one and one-quarter miles along the right margin of the Sudbury River, from Hubbard's or Heath Bridge to Willow or Lily Bay. Hubbard's Brook, rising at the Boiling Spring on the lower slopes of Fair Haven Hill, crosses the old Hubbard Farm fields in its lower reach, and flows through the great swamp and meadow to empty into the Sudbury River.

The tract's physiography encompasses numerous places frequented by country walkers and lovers of river haunts and riparian scenery; places often praised or sung in Thoreau's writings and that have become part of Concord's historic landscape. Among these sites, we may recognize, besides places mentioned above, Hubbard's Grove, where some of Concord's most ancient white pines rise to lofty heights; Hubbard's Second or Further Grove, a mature oak wood lying also on high ground and that reaches to the river; and Cyanean Meadow, or the watery heart of Hubbard's Great Meadow. Down the Hubbard Shore on the right margin of the Sudbury, the boater drifts along riparian sites such as Arethusa Meadow, named after the shy and rare Arethusa orchid; Clamshell Bend, where the Sudbury turns in an easterly direction; Sunset Reach, or Cyanean Reach, "where the river flows," as Thoreau describes it in his journal entry for February 12, 1860, "nearly from west to east and is a fine sparkling scene from the hills eastward at sunset."[2] Hubbard's Bend and Hubbard's Bathing-place follow as the river resumes its northerly flow, with Hubbard's Fishing Place by that same spot. The stream then picks up pace along the Swift Place, where the river channel narrows, only to expand at Willow or Lily Bay. All these places loom large in Concord's telluric soul and inviolable natural legacy.

The old farm fields, strung between the river woods and Sudbury Road, have been in agricultural use since the eighteenth century, formerly part of a larger farming area and community centered on a cluster of farm houses at what was known as Hubbardville, where several generations of the Hubbard and Potter families and a Wheeler family branch lived and farmed. Land ownership passing to other hands over the years, much of the farmland around Hubbardville became developed, although the land at the old Hubbard Farm, which at one time reached to 125 acres, has been spared to a great extent, with the farm fields remaining productive to this day.[3]

The Hubbard fields consist today of three tracts: one, a field for crops in an eighteen-acre parcel, currently on sale, lying to the southwest of Hubbard's Brook and fronting on Sudbury Road; two, a field or pasture of approximately equal size lying to the northeast of the brook and fronting on Sudbury Road and the Route 2 highway, formerly calledHubbard's Pasture but known today as the Bigelow Field, after former owner, Dr. Henry B. Bigelow, whose heirs bestowed the field and adjacent woods and swamp to the Concord Land Conservation Trust; and, three, the thirty-seven acre town-owned South Meadow, partly in woodland and wetland, extending west from the old Hubbard farmhouses in Hubbardville, this section of the Hubbard tract separated from the other fields by the intrusion of Route 2 and by intervening development along Sudbury Road.

The eighteen-acre parcel highlighted above, currently on the market, one of Cyrus Hubbard's farm fields that Thoreau called "Hubbard's Grain Field,"[4] becomes key and critical to the history and integrity of the entire Hubbard tract. The field, to go into more detail, fronting on Sudbury Road (the old "Corner Road"), extends southeast to northwest, diagonally across the compass, as it were, southwest of Hubbard's Brook and into the woods at Hubbard's Second Grove. It was this "grain field," in particular, that inspired Thoreau's thoughts in a fairly early journal entry on September 7, 1851, in which he defines his "profession" and "business," that is, his life's "errand," and in which he ranges poetically in the description of the field's scenery and ambience at the close of the day. "The scenery, when it is truly seen," Thoreau observes in that entry, "reacts on the life of the seer. How to live. How to get the most of life…," defining his life's own terms with "That is my every-day business… I ramble over all fields on that errand… My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in nature, to know his lurking places…," or, as Thoreau also puts it in the same journal entry, to exercise "the art of spending a day."[5]

On that foray, to "Conantum *via* fields, Hubbard's Grove, and grain field…," Thoreau describes the hour's scene on that September day at Hubbard's Grain Field itself: "I hear no larks sing at evening as in the spring, nor robins… In Hubbard's grain field beyond the brook, now the sun is down. The air is very still. There is a fine sound of crickets… The heavy shadows of woods and trees are remarkable now… I hear only a tree toad or song sparrow singing as in spring, at long intervals. The Roman wormwood is beginning to yellow-green my shoes, intermingled with the blue curls over the sand in this grain field. Perchance some poet likened this yellow dust to the ambrosia of the gods. The birds are remarkably silent… bats are out."[6] This is a scene that, exactly as described by Thoreau, could be experienced today at that same field.

Cyrus Hubbard, after whom all of these places in his old farmstead have been named and are known today, was one of those wise and sensible Concord farmers that Thoreau much admired and expressed affection for. "I see the old pale-faced farmer out again on his sled," Thoreau writes of the man in his journal entry for December 1, 1856, "now for the five-thousandth time, Cyrus Hubbard, a man of a certain New England probity and worth, immortal and natural… like the sweetness of a nut, like the toughness of hickory. He, too, is a redeemer for me… What an institution, what a revelation is a man! … It is a great encouragement that an honest man makes this world his abode."[7]

Over the years, Hubbard's Grain Field, one of Concord's oldest fields in constant agricultural use, has yielded grain, asparagus, beef, silage, hay, sweet corn and squash, and likely

other farm produce, the field worked and improved over the last few decades by Mr. Steve Verrill, local farmer.

The Concord Land Conservation Trust, as we are aware, has risen to the occasion to seek to preserve the field parcel currently on the market as part of Concord's natural and historical legacy, much of which it keeps under its custody and care. The Trust merits our unstinted support in this endeavor. By preserving Hubbard's Grain Field, we not only preserve a valuable field part of the agricultural heritage of the town, but spare the integrity of Hubbard's River Tract, one of the beauty spots in Concord, a tract much of whose extent lies already under conservation protection. In supporting the Trust's preservation effort, we also pay tribute to the memory of an idiosyncratic Concord farmer in Cyrus Hubbard and to Concord's very own poet-philosopher, Henry Thoreau.

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If there is any hell more unprincipled than our rulers & our people—I feel curious to visit it.

***Journal*, June 16, 1854, after the arrest of Anthony Burns**

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Elegantly written and filled with surprising insights, Dr. Sperber's book adds a new chapter to our understanding of Thoreau. For those like myself, who have a knee-jerk reaction against psychological reductionism, be reassured—it is this doctor's erudition that makes this medicine go down.

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Price: $17.95

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We are indebted to the following individuals for information used in this *Bulletin*: Marjorie Harding, Henrik Otterberg, Richard Winslow III. Please keep your editor informed of items not yet added and new items as they appear.

President's Column

Tom Potter

This year the newly appointed Development Committee is working on a comprehensive plan to help us meet both our short term and long range financial challenges. Paula Peinovich is chairing and is assisted by members Kurt Aschermann, Joe Wheeler and Executive Director Mike Frederick. Parts of the plan will be initiated this spring with a donation challenge to the board. Soon thereafter you will hear more about how you can help. That said, under the guidance of the Finance Committee chaired by J. Walter Brain we have already reduced the operating deficit for this fiscal year. We anticipate an increase in income from several areas and will watch the operating expenses to see that there is no waste.

On another note, this year's Annual Gathering will be one not to miss. A number of presentations will be delivered by recognized experts on a wide variety of topics surrounding Thoreau, Emerson and the world of politics. When you receive your program you will see what I mean. I thank Wayne Dilts for his work on putting together an excellent Gathering, and I look forward to seeing many old friends there and meeting some new ones. Concord and Walden Pond await you!

Notes from Concord

Michael Frederick, Executive Director

The Thoreau Society is the largest and oldest organization devoted to an American author. For sixty-seven years, the Society has brought together individuals interested in the life, works, and legacy of Henry D. Thoreau. We pride ourselves with being an inclusive organization open to all individuals who value intellectual depth and engagement with challenging ideas.

Over the decades, our understanding of Thoreau has evolved significantly. Consider the following timeline. During the American Great Depression, his writings were read with a certain regard for his thoughts on simplicity, followed by an interest in his political thought as relevant to civil rights issues. More recently he is being read as a seminal figure in the field of ecology and has been referred to as the "father of environmentalism" by Edward O. Wilson. Moreover, for those who know him through his writings, Thoreau is an eminently practical man—always desiring to test his assumptions through experimentation and deliberate living.

To help us further explore areas in which Thoreau has an influence, the Society launched its first annual Thoreau Society Lyceum in April, a three-week lecture series that explored the ideas of three influential professionals in different fields.

John Chateauneuf, our part-time Educational Coordinator, arranged the speakers for this year and is already working on three for 2009.

On April 2, William Moomaw discussed living deliberately in the nineteenth century and the process of creating an energy-neutral home in the twenty-first—a home that produces as much energy as it consumes. Dr. Moomaw is Professor of International Environmental Policy and Director of the Center for International Environment and Resource Policy at the Fletcher School, Tufts University. He was a lead author for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, whose report recently won a Nobel prize.

On April 9, Carol Kauffman discussed how to explore the positive side of what we daily think, do, and encounter, in order to understand better the conditions and processes that improve our ability to flourish as individuals. Dr. Kauffman is Assistant Clinical Professor at Harvard Medical School; Founding Director of the Coaching and Positive Psychology Initiative at McLean Hospital; a member of the Dept of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; and Co-Editor in Chief of *Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research & Practice*.

On April 16, Herbert Benson addressed the profound importance and prevalence of stress-related disorders in our society that are poorly, if at all, treated by pharmaceuticals and surgery. The relaxation response is an effective approach to counteract the harmful effects of stress and can be achieved by secular or religious approaches. Dr. Benson is the Director Emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine and the Mind/Body Medical Institute; and an Associate Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School.

Each discussion lasted an hour or more with a question and answer session following. The events were captured on DVD and will be available at the shop at Walden Pond and our eStore later this spring.

To reserve copies, contact: info@thoreausociety.org.

Jim Hayden, Director of Marketing and Public Relations

The ice did indeed stay through most of what turned out to be a very snowy winter. Ice out occurred in March, but the cold blustery weather continued into April. As I write this, we have just had our first real spring day, with temperatures climbing into the upper 60s. The birds seem to be enjoying it, as well as the fishermen who arrive at the pond every dawn. Apparently they too like to rise before the dawn and seek new adventures!

In *Walden*, Henry wrote, "I went to the woods to live deliberately. . . ." In the spirit of his effort to live a simple, natural, spiritual and just life, we are proud to announce the introduction of a new line of products to be offered through the shop at Walden Pond. We are working with several environmentally friendly companies to produce items that will inspire visitors to seek a "deliberate" lifestyle. That area of the shop (and the on-line store), when completed, will host a variety of books and products dealing with the environment, recycling, and ecology, as well as people who have also been inspired by Thoreau such as Gandhi, King and others. It is our hope that those who seek to live a deliberate, Thoreauvian life, will find a home in this section. We also hope that through family-activity books and products we can help educate a new generation (and their parents too) regarding Thoreau's ideas and their application in today's world.

We are also preparing for this year's Annual Gathering, and will have a host of new products ready for that event. The Gathering will be the official kick off of our "Live Deliberately" line of products. Look for new t-shirts, totes and other products to be introduced there. As in the past few years, we will have a satellite shop at the Masonic Hall during the Gathering. If you

can't make it to Concord, we will have all the products on-line for purchase as well.

Finally, I want to let you all know that the membership office has moved back to our headquarters in Concord. I apologize for any delays you may encounter as we make the switch. I am currently getting up to speed on the program and hope to have it running smoothly soon. I would like to thank Bob Clarke for his efforts over the past couple years in setting up and streamlining the process in his stint as Membership Director. He has done an amazing job, and I hope I can do it just as well. Remember to stop by the shop when you are in Concord, or let us come to you via the always-open on-line shop at www.shopatwaldenpond.org.

John Chateauneuf and Carol Kauffman at the Thoreau Lyceum, April 9, 2008. Photo courtesy of Michael Frederick

Herbert Benson at the Lyceum, April 16, 2008. Photo courtesy of Michael Frederick.

Notes & Queries

We thank our authors who contributed to this issue: **J. Walter Brain** is a member of the Thoreau Society Board of Directors; **Randall Conrad** is an independent scholar in Lexington, Mass. and runs an educational website about Thoreau at www.calliope.org; **Susan Frome** is a member of the Thoreau Society and an essayest on aspects of Thoreau and others. She is also a moview reviewer and feature writer for *The Country and Abroad*; **Cathryn McIntyre** is writer and an independent scholar living in Concord. Her book, *Honor in Concord*, will be published this spring; **Sandra Harbert Petrulionis** is Professor of English and American Studies at Penn State-Altoona; **David M. Robinson** is Distinguished Professor of American Literature at Oregon State University; **Larry Rosenwald** is Anne Pierce Rogers Professor of American Literature at Wellesley College; **Robert M. Thorson** is Professor of Geology at the University of Connecticut. He is jointly affiliated with the Department of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and the Department of Anthropology.

Donovan Hohn's memoir "Falling: Confessions of a Lapsed Forest Christian" (*Harper's Magazine*, April 2008, pp. 57-70) uses a quotation from "Walking" as an epigraph and makes several comments on Thoreau. Jerry Adler in "Out of the Wilderness" (*Newsweek*, February 18, 2008, p. 51) also quotes from Thoreau.

Tim Clemmer found the children's "Mini Page" in the January 19, 2008, issue of the *Carbon County (PA) Times News* devoted to Thoreau.

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Sandy Petrulionis reports an article on Tom Slayton, who is following Thoreau's several excursions. in the *Altoona (PA) Mirror* for January 27, 2008. Richard Winslow III found much the same article in the December 31, 2007 issue of the *Boston Globe*. **Bob Clarke** heard the WNPR radio essay "Where we Live" on January 10, 2008 during which Nancy Cohen interviewed Slayton.

Beth Witherell is quoted on editing Thoreau in the *Slate* on-line article by Megan Marshall, "The Impossible Art of Deciphering Manuscripts" for February 8, 2008.

Mark Sullivan calls our attention to several references to Thoreau in Andrew Delbanco's *The Death of Satan* (1995).

Richard Smith reports the use of the familiar "lives of quiet desperation" line in a review of a revival of William Inge's *Come Back, Little Sheba* in the *New York Times* for January 25, 2008.

Ed Schofield found Thoreau references in a story on Don Henley, "A Pretty Fly Guy" in the London *Independent*, November 11, 2007. Ed also passed along a web site, "Strike the Root" (www.strike-the-root.com) that uses a Thoreau quotation and his image on its masthead.

The Board of Directors of the Thoreau Society seeks applications to be the editor of *The Thoreau Society Bulletin*. Send inquiries with statements of qualifications to Mike Frederick, Executive Director of the Thoreau Society.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS NEEDED FOR CONCORD AND SURROUNDING TOWNS

Researchers at Boston University are studying the effects of global warming on spring arrival times of songbirds to the Concord area. For past years, they have used the journals of Henry David Thoreau and ornithologists Brewster and Griscom. Now, they need records of arrival times for any years since 1960. If you have records (or know any one else who has such records) of the arrival times of songbirds to Concord, Acton, Carlisle, Bedford, Lincoln, Wayland, Sudbury and/or Maynard for any recent span of years, please contact:

Libby Bacon, email: bacon@bu.edu or Richard Primack, email: primack@bu.edu. Tel: 617-353-2454

See: http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/walden.html for similar work done in their lab.

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to honor Henry David Thoreau by stimulating interest in and fostering education about his life, works, and philosophy and his place in his world and ours; by encouraging research on his life and writings; by acting as a repository for Thoreauviana and material relevant to Henry David Thoreau; and by advocating for the preservation of Thoreau Country. Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer* (published annually). Society members receive a ten-percent discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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Please submit items for the Summer *Bulletin* to your editor before July 15, 2008

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